

Why Some Of Us Take Things More Personally



NEW PATHS COUNSELLING

An ACT-Informed Guide to Understanding Emotional Sensitivity

Many people feel hurt easily or take things personally – even when they *know* the other person didn't mean to cause harm. This isn't a flaw. It's a pattern shaped by your nervous system, your history, and the meanings your mind automatically creates.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) offers a compassionate way to understand this experience and work with it rather than against it.

1. Your Mind is a Meaning Making Machine

When something happens – a tone, a look, a comment – your mind instantly tries to interpret it.

For some people, the mind jumps to stories like:

- “They're upset with me.”
- “I did something wrong.”
- “I'm being rejected.”
- “I'm not valued.”

These stories often come from old experiences, not the current moment. ACT calls this **fusion** – when we get tangled up in our thoughts as if they are facts.

2. Your Nervous System Reacts Before You Can Think

If you've learned (through life experience, relationships, or temperament) that connection or approval equals safety, your nervous system becomes extra alert to signs of disconnection.

So when something feels “off,” your body reacts quickly:

- Tight chest
- Heat or tension
- Drop in the stomach
- Urge to withdraw
- Feeling hurt or overwhelmed

This is not overreacting – it's your body trying to protect you.

3. Old Wounds Can Echo Into the Present

If you've been criticized, dismissed, or misunderstood in the past, your mind becomes skilled at scanning for similar patterns.

ACT teaches that these are **learned stories**, not truths about who you are.

You're not reacting to *this* moment — you're reacting to the echoes of many moments.

4. Hurt Sticks Because It Touches What Matters

We take things personally when something important is at stake:

- belonging
- respect
- being seen
- being valued
- being safe in relationships

Your sensitivity is a sign of your **values**, not your weakness.

5. ACT Helps You Step Out of the Story

Instead of trying to stop the thoughts or feelings, ACT helps you:

Notice

"I'm having the thought that they're upset with me."

Unhook

"This is my old 'I did something wrong' story."

Make space

"It's okay that this hurts. I can breathe with it."

Choose action

"What would I do here if I were guided by my values, not my fear?"

This is how you move from automatic reactions to intentional responses.

*With care,
Christine*

